

ENGLISH LOYAL TO U.S. ON CUBA, BRITON CLAIMS

BY WAYNE THOMIS

Britain ordered its heavy jet bomber force and its Thor missile squadrons "quietly but quickly" to combat readiness when the Cuban crisis over Russian missile bases occurred last October. Sir John Slessor, retired royal air force marshal, told the English Speaking Union here yesterday.

There can be no grounds for criticism of the resolute loyalty to the alliance (United States and North Atlantic treaty nations) shown by the British government during that grim week," Slessor said. "We backed your president wholeheartedly from the beginning."

He spoke at a luncheon meeting of the union in the Sheraton-Blackstone hotel.

Misgivings Continue

There were and continue to be some misgivings in Britain. Marshal Slessor added, that "tend to impair British-United States relations." There is a strong impression in a segment of the British public that Americans are "intemperate and trigger happy."

Referring again to the Cuban incident, he said there was anxiety and fear in England, and added: "We in our small crowded island feel rather in the front line on an occasion like this."

It is difficult to define precisely the reasons for such doubts as there were about American action," Marshal Slessor said. "It's not pleasant to feel you may be on the brink of nuclear war about an issue of which you know very little and in which you have no control. There was the handover from Suez and from the late Mr. Dulles' exercises in brinkmanship, and there was the memory of the Bay of Pigs and the U-2 incident, neither of which did much to inspire confidence in American judgment."

CIA Evidence Distrusted

The vast mistrust of the CIA and of the evidence about offensive missiles in Cuba until photographic proof became available—and there was an uneasy feeling that

Anti-American sentiment in Britain, the marshal said, is "emotional and political." Emotional because of resentment over "the leading role America inevitably has assumed in the world today, and at our being no longer in the first rank of powers. Political, he said, because "rather muddled-up people" see United States bases and soldiers "as visible targets in our country, and the Russians are not there."

The marshal said British opinion would not support an American attack on Cuba, "just to get rid of Castro." The British position is that he will fall in time. There has been some difference of viewpoint on the Congo, he said, but Britain has been an important financial supporter of the United Nations actions there, as has the United States, and Britons would "like to see the Congo reunited under a moderate, pro-Western government."

Cites Skybolt Uproar

The Skybolt uproar, Marshal Slessor said, was really a British reaction to American insistence upon retaining control and decision in uses of nuclear "deterrents." This falls under the "resentment" category.

Finally, Marshal Slessor asked for understanding of Britain's absolute requirement to trade, including trade with Russia, purchases of Soviet oil and exchanges of civil goods, including aircraft, with China.

"Normal trade relations tend to make the freeze out of the cold war," he concluded. "But our policy is to enforce strictly the strategic embargo list."

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